

White House  
Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia.

HABS No. 14-7

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 14

Historic American Buildings Survey  
P. Thornton Marye, District Officer  
62 Bartow St., N.W., Atlanta, Georgia

WHITE HOUSE  
Augusta, Richmond County  
Georgia

HISTORICAL NOTES:

By local tradition this house was built prior to 1750, and it is said to be the oldest building standing in Augusta. It was originally called "McKay's Trading Post". A letter of Mrs. Beverly Walker, whose father bought the place in 1799, states that the original owner was Ezekiel Harris.

"In September 1780 Gen. Elijah Clarke, with a small army of Patriots, undertook to recapture Augusta. He succeeded in driving Browne's army out of the city, and they took refuge in the large building just outside of the town known as the White House".<sup>1</sup>

It was occupied as headquarters by British Officers during the Revolution and thirteen American soldiers are said to have been hanged as spies within the well of the circular stairway by order of Captain Brown of the British Army.

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<sup>1</sup> Knight, L.L., Georgia's Landmarks, Memorials and Legends, vol. 1, 494,495.

P. Thornton Marye  
District Officer, HABS.

(Revised at HABS Headquarters,  
1936, H.C.F.; original  
~~sheet in field notebook~~).

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WHITE HOUSE  
Augusta, Richmond County  
Georgia

Owner: Mrs. Louise B. Barrett.

Date of Erection: Before 1750 (?).

Architect and Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Fair.

Number of Stories: Two.

Materials of Construction: Wood.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following page.

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WHITE HOUSE  
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Architectural Notes:

The wide and squat gambrel roof and the two brick chimneys with spread footings give to this house an unusual appearance. The second floor projects out over the ten foot wide front porch; but it appears as though this projection was a later addition and that there once was a two-storey porch. Both chimneys are of the "freestanding" variety, and the west one is T-shaped in plan.

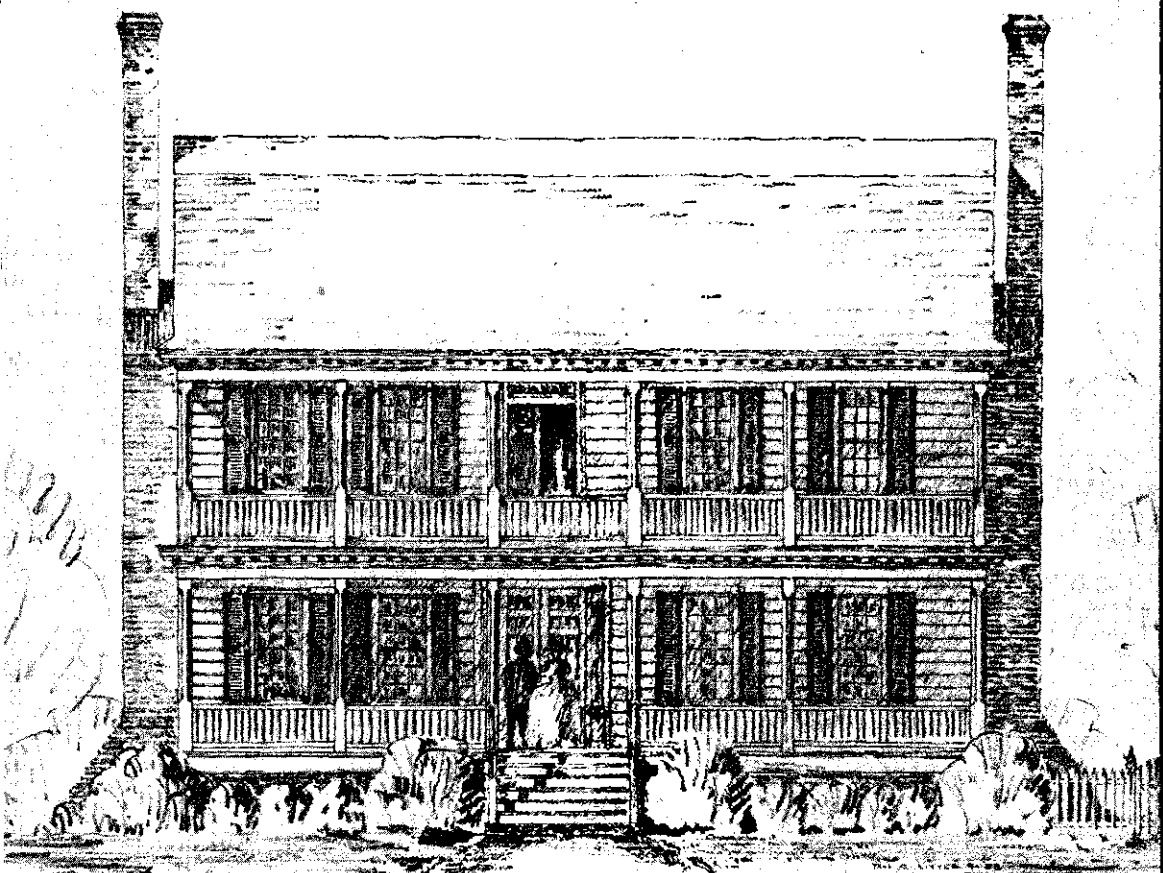
The original circular stairway was removed and replaced with another by the present owner, Mrs. Louise B. Barrett.<sup>1</sup>

*Hef*  
Henry Chandlee Forman  
1936

<sup>1</sup> Given by P. Thornton Marye.

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# MACKAY HOUSE



*Sketch by Thomas G. Little, historical architect, of the original front of Mackay House, a pre-Revolutionary residence "denominated the White-house" by McCall in 1811.*

1822 Broad Street, Augusta, Georgia

**GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

A map of Georgia showing major highways and cities. The map includes labels for Dalton, Chatsworth, Toocoo, Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Macon, Columbus, Albany, Valdosta, Brunswick, and Savannah. Highways are marked with numbers in shields: 41, 411, 23, 78, 18, 17, 80, 12, 441, 94, and 17. An arrow points to a location on the highway between Athens and Augusta, labeled 'MACKAY HOUSE'.

In 1934 when the historic structure known as the White House was cited by the Historic American Buildings Survey, it had long been famous for the battle fought there during the American Revolution and for the martyred patriots who were hanged from the stairway by the British Colonel, Thomas Brown. Captain Hugh McCall, writing in 1811, remembered the battle site in this way, "Mackay's Trading House, denominated the White House, one mile and a half west of the town."

To restore Mackay House to its most historic period and preserve it as a Revolutionary Period shrine, the Georgia Historical Commission acquired the house in 1956, and employed the late historical architect, Thomas G. Little. A battle in 1780, nineteenth century additions, and three fires, had not entirely obscured what Mr. Little called "the finest example of Colonial frame residential architecture south of the Potomac," Ernest M. Frank, Director of Architecture of Colonial Williamsburg, who succeeded Mr. Little after his death in 1962, concurred in this opinion. The house was dedicated and opened to the public in 1964.

During the restoration, one of the most interesting discoveries was the fact that "Mackay's Trading House, denominated the White House" was originally grayish blue with dark red shutters—only the trim was white. In the nineteenth century, Mackay House had been renovated, painted white, and its unique open-air staircase on the back piazza—where the patriots were hanged—closed up and made into a spiral stair. Open-air stairs, which are the only access to the second and third floors, and several other features which distinguish this house from others built during the colonial period in Georgia have been restored. Three of these architectural features are: galleried two-story porches constituting front and rear facades in the style of the West Indies as modified in coastal Carolina; a gambrel roof and other details indicating New England influences especially Newport, Rhode Island; and a front entrance and interior woodwork showing unusual dependence on early builders guidebooks like Abraham Swan's *British Architect*, published in London in 1745.

On the first floor are eighteenth century furnishings compatible with the architecture; on the second, exhibits about the South during the Revolution; and on the third, exhibits of Augusta's extensive Pre-Revolutionary Indian trade.

The date Mackay House was built and the names of persons responsible for its decidedly masculine architecture are unknown. Architectural evidence combined with documentary research provides clues and, at the same time, documents historical events long associated with the house.

The land on which Mackey House stands was part of a 500 acre tract granted to Thomas Red, a Virginia planter, in September, 1757. Although Red improved the property before selling it to John Francis Williams in 1761, Mackay House was probably built by Williams, or perhaps Robert Mackay, not Thomas Red. Dating stylistically from the decade 1760 - 1770, its galleries two story piazzas would have been familiar to Williams, a native of Barbados who came to Augusta about 1760 from Charleston, S. C. to engage in the Indian trade. Robert Mackay who began a business association with Williams sometime between 1765 and 1768 was equally familiar with those areas. Mackay was born in Scotland and went to Jamaica at an early age. Before coming to Augusta, he was in the trading

business in Jamaica, Cuba, Charleston and Beaufort, S. C. Close connections with the West Indies and with ports along the eastern seaboard as far north as Newport, Rhode Island, were usual for men engaged in the Indian trade out of Augusta. "Mackay's Trading House" is living evidence of that connection. Whether Williams or Mackay, separately or together, were responsible for its blend of architectural features may never be known, but undoubtedly the house served perfectly as a trading post and a residence during a period when Augusta was the largest trading center in the Southeast.

"Mackay's Trading House" was a center of activity which spread deep into Indian country. Each spring some 600 men with 2,000 pack horses came to town. The Trading House was stocked with trade goods and supplies for outfitting these caravans, as well as for barter with Indians who came to the post. In common with many Scots of his day, Robert Mackay had a remarkable aptitude for making friends with the Indians. Among his Indian friends was Ernestisego, chief of the Creek town of Little Tallassie, one of the towns where Mackay kept a subsidiary trading station. A frequent visitor at the Trading House, "the Big Fellow" was for many years a power in frontier politics.

There was a period, too, when gracious living formed part of the picture at Mackay's trading House. In the summer of 1769, Mackay's business partner John Francis Williams, sailed up to Newport, Rhode Island, where he met and married Catherine Chilcott, the fifteen year old daughter of Mrs. Mary Chilcott, a widow. Mrs. Chilcott, daughter of shipping magnate Godfrey Malbone and aunt of miniaturist Edward Greene Malbone, accompanied Williams and her daughter when they returned to Augusta in 1770. In the winter of 1771, Robert Mackay married her. Mary Mackay no doubt felt right at home in the three story frame house with its gambrel roof and interiors so similar to Newport houses. She wrote to her husband in January, 1775, while he was in Savannah on business: "I hardly know how to ask you, Mr. Mackay, to bring more plates, but I assure you the old ones have all disappeared so all at once, that I find it difficult to make them go around for the present family and you know two dozen and a half will by no means do when we have company."

The partnership of Williams and Mackay, which was unsatisfactory to Mackay, was dissolved in 1770. Some time prior to 1775, Andrew McLean became Mackay's partner under the firm name of "Mackay and McLean." When Williams and Mackay died in that year, McLean took charge of the trading business and married Williams' widow, Catherine. Soon after that, Mrs. Mackay and her young son, Robert Gordon Mackay, left the Trading House, probably to live with her daughter and son-in-law at The Garden, their home in Augusta.

Business continued at the Trading House during the early years of the Revolution. When Governor Wright sent a shipment of presents to insure the Indians' support of the British cause in September of 1780, they were stored there. The presents, valued at £4,000, were at the trading post when Colonel Elijah Clark made his surprise attack on the British on September 14, 1780.

Accounts of the battle that ensued vary, but several agree that the following events occurred: Colonel Clark tried to take Mackay House, held by a force of Indians and a company of the King's Rangers under Captain Andrew Johnson. Tory Colonel Thomas Brown quickly came to Johnson's aid. Brown, still bitter because Augusta patriots had given him a coat of tar and feathers in 1775, fortified the house and grounds. On the night of the 15th, fifty Cherokee Indians reinforced Brown's troops, but the Americans continued to besiege the House until the morning of the 18th, when additional British reinforcements forced their retreat.

Twenty-nine Americans whose wounds would not permit their removal were left in Augusta and taken prisoner by Brown. Thirteen were hanged on the staircase of Mackay's Trading House "where Brown was lying wounded, so that he might have the satisfaction of seeing the victims of his vengeance expire." The others "were delivered to the Indians, who formed a circle, and placed the prisoners in the center. Some were thrown into the fires, and others roasted to death."

There is no evidence that any of the Mackay family occupied the Trading House after the beginning of the Revolution. It emerged from the War, or immediately thereafter, as the White House.

The Georgia Historical Commission has placed the Mackay House on the National Register of Historic Places of the United States Department of the Interior.



# THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Georgia Historical Commission was created in 1951 within the Department of the Secretary of State. The members and secretary are appointed by the Secretary of State, Ben W. Fortson, Jr. The duties and powers of the Commission are to promote and increase knowledge and understanding of the history of Georgia from earliest times to the present; to promote and publicize historical resources of the State; to coordinate its objectives with similar agencies; to cooperate and counsel with local organizations for historical purposes. In addition to maintaining historic sites, the Commission has erected historical markers over the State, that Georgia's past may be known in detail to residents and tourists.

Joseph B. Cumming, Augusta, is Chairman of the Commission. Members are: Dr. James C. Bonner, Milledgeville; Mrs. William Lawton Brannen, Metter; Dr. James T. Bryson, Washington; Beverly M. DuBose, Jr., Atlanta; John H. Goddard, Griffin; Thomas H. Gignilliat, Savannah; Dr. Henry T. Malone, Atlanta; Gordon F. Price, Atlanta; Mrs. Sidney B. Jewett, Avondale Estates, is Executive Secretary.

## HISTORIC SITES IN THE COMMISSION'S CUSTODY

- CHEHAW INDIAN MONUMENT, Memorial to a friendly Indian town, Ga. 195, 3 miles north of Leesburg.
- CONFEDERATE NAVAL MUSEUM, 4th Street just west of US 27 in Columbus.
- DAHLONEGA COURTHOUSE GOLD MUSEUM, US 19 at Dahlonega.
- EAGLE TAVERN, Stagecoach stop, store and tavern, US 129, US 441 at Watkinsville.
- ETOWAH MOUNDS ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA, Indian ceremonial center, west of US 411 and US 41 at Cartersville.
- FORT KING GEORGE, in 1721 the southernmost English outpost; prior to that the site of a Spanish Mission, on the Altamaha River, east of US 17 at Darien.
- FORT JACKSON MARITIME MUSEUM, 3 miles east of Savannah on river.
- FORT McALLISTER, Confederate fort for defense of Savannah, 10 miles east of US 17 at Richmond Hill.
- FORT MORRIS, Revolutionary Fort, 10 miles east of US 17 at Midway.
- CRAWFORD W. LONG MEDICAL MUSEUM, honoring first doctor to use ether as an anesthetic (in 1842), US 129 at Jefferson.
- MACKAY HOUSE, Revolutionary shrine, 1822 Broad Street in Augusta.
- MIDWAY MUSEUM, Memorial to founders of Georgia's "Cradle of Liberty," US 17 at Midway.
- NEW ECHOTA, Last eastern capital of the Cherokee Nation, north of Calhoun, on Ga. 225, 2 miles east of US 41.
- NEW HOPE CHURCH MONUMENT, Important battle site of the War Between the States, Ga. 92, 4 miles northeast of US 278 at Dallas.
- HISTORIC TRAVELER'S REST, Pioneer home and inn, US 123, 6 miles East of Toccoa.
- TROUP TOMB, Restored tomb of Georgia's original "State's Righter" who defied a President, 8 miles west of Soperton off Ga. 46.
- VANN HOUSE, Restored finest home in the Cherokee Nation, Ga. 225, US 76 at Spring Place.
- WASHINGTON-WILKES HISTORICAL MUSEUM, Confederate Museum and ante-bellum home, US 78, US 378 in Washington.
- WAYNESBORO HISTORICAL MUSEUM, US 25, Waynesboro, Ga.

For further information, please write

Georgia Historical Commission  
116 Mitchell Street, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303